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## **Introduction**

### **Revisiting the Argentine Crisis a Decade on: Changes and Continuities**

Daniel Ozarow, Cara Levey and Christopher Wylde

The specter of crisis haunts the capitalist world. Indeed, it was an all too familiar phenomenon throughout less industrialized countries in the second half of the twentieth century, and especially in Latin America during the 1980s debt crisis. Usage of the term passed the Rubicon in the post-Lehman Brothers world and has now entered everyday language among the world's advanced capitalist societies in a way not seen since the Great Depression. The various responses and uneven recoveries to the current global financial crisis have been the subject of a cascade of academic, government, media, and think-tank investigations. This volume will analyze crisis and both its spontaneous and planned responses and subsequent recovery in the context of Argentina's social, economic and political implosion of 2001-02.

However, this book is unique in its understanding of the nature of crisis and how its impacts should be investigated and interrogated. First, it seeks to reject false dichotomies of "old" and "new"; instead synthesizing them in order to construct an analysis that incorporates both elements of continuity and elements of change into the debate. Moreover, the authors assert that responses to crisis do *not only* involve the merging of old and new, but that they are also, concurrently, responses to both old and new *problems*-many of which pre-date 2001. Second, it recognizes that crisis manifests itself in a number of realms-political, economic, social-and that heuristic devices employed to investigate them must also be drawn from a

number of academic disciplines. This second point is in recognition of the fact that models of political economy, by their very essence and definition, come to encompass all aspects of social life and social reproduction. In the case of Argentina's (and Latin America more widely) encounter with neoliberalism in 1980s and 1990s, this model manifested itself not just through its economic policy but also in the nature of its social contract, its cultural (re)production and its very social fabric.

In many ways, Argentina's 2001-02 crisis represents a watershed in national and regional history. The scale of the economy's collapse, coupled with a crisis of political legitimacy provoked a demand for *¡Qué se vayan todos!* (They all must go!)-the popular term employed by the protestors during the dramatic events of 19 and 20 December 2001, when social uprisings across Argentina (most notably in the City of Buenos Aires) and the widely-held desire to replace the political, legal and economic establishment as well as the neoliberal model – were articulated with profound affects. Therefore the responses and associated recovery can, and indeed must, be analyzed and interpreted through a myriad of lenses in order to adequately capture the character of the salient dynamics that are present within them. Yet at the same time, the crisis and post-crisis periods reveal a surprising number of continuities with the pre-crisis panorama. Therefore, the responses to the protestors and their demands of *Que se vayan todos* on the streets during December 2001 were not simply a reflection of those demands, but rather represent a complex kaleidoscope that combined elements of change with elements of continuity. In this way, the volume seeks to adopt a more nuanced approach to analyzing Argentina since 2001 than any that have gone before it.

### ***Overview of a crisis***

During the 1990s, if Argentina was edging closer towards the precipice of one of the worst crises in living memory, a superficial glance at the country at that time would perhaps have suggested otherwise. Indeed, Argentina was hailed by the IMF as the poster child of the

economic adjustment policies that constituted what Williamson (1989) termed the “Washington Consensus”. These included fiscal tightening, mass privatizations and the liberalization of trade and capital flows, which were promoted with such gusto by the agents of neoliberalism. By the middle of the decade, President Carlos Menem’s government could boast that it had impressively brought hyperinflation (that had reached 4,900 per cent in 1989) under control and had secured strong, consistent growth. Moreover, the foundation of the entire economic model was underpinned by the pegging of the Argentine currency to the US Dollar under *Convertibilidad* (Convertibility) - the policy introduced by the Minister of the Economy in April 1991). As depicted so skillfully by Gabriel Condron in his cinematic parody *Un Peso, Un Dólar* (Condron 2006), this policy of a strong currency and free-flowing credit engendered three sentiments which were essential to the broad acceptance of the model. Firstly it generated an air of perceived enrichment, because luxury imported technology, cars, computers and foreign holidays became so affordable. Secondly, the entrepreneurial Zeitgeist that was encouraged by the media and government convinced many Argentines that they were finally able to fulfill the dreams of their immigrant parents and grandparents by becoming middle class. Third, and perhaps equally as crucial was that it created a sense that the country’s perceived historic “destiny” of arriving in the First World was finally being fulfilled (Armony and Armony 2005).

Meanwhile the social consequences of creeping unemployment, poverty and exclusion and underlying economic problems caused by Convertibility (such as uncompetitive domestic industry, loss of overseas markets, growing balance of payments problems and personal indebtedness) remained obscured by the veil of this consumerist paradise. These problems would explode with a vengeance, but for now remained hidden in what Galiani et al. (2003) termed the illusion of “Great Expectations”.

Even as late as the beginning of 2000, despite a recession, there was a general consensus amongst economists, investment banks, and international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that the Argentine economy was in a healthy state. Growth of 3-4 per cent was anticipated (IMF 2000: 5) and the banking and financial sectors were considered to be on a sound footing. Furthermore, appropriate capital and liquidity provisions were secured and no significant structural problems were identified (IMF 2000a, 6). In addition, overall improvements in the external environment such as rising global commodity prices, a US Dollar devaluation *vis-à-vis* the Euro, and a revaluation of the Brazilian Real were expected to provide a boost to Argentine exports (Chudnovsky 2007, 145). The economy's fiscal base also seemed to be strengthening, with the primary surplus improving by about two percentage points of GDP between 1999 and 2000 (IMF 2000, 58; Mecon 2007). Therefore, there was little indication that a meltdown was imminent. Indeed, with the exception of a very small number of Argentine economists (for example, Carillo, Curia & Conesa 2001), there was no sustained demand for an exit from Convertibility, with even the IMF maintaining belief in the peg (IMF 2004, 3).

The first signs of serious trouble came in late-2000 when Vice-President Carlos “Chacho” Alvarez of the *Alianza* (Alliance for Work, Justice and Education) coalition resigned from his post on 6 October in protest at revelations of the bribing of parliamentary deputies by President Fernando de la Rúa and others during the vote on labor reforms. This weakened the government, since a number of ministers left with him. Moreover, Alvarez had been a unifying figure who ensured relative stability within the *Alianza* - a disparate electoral front which brought together the Civic Radical Union (UCR) and Front for a Country in Solidarity (FrePaSo)-which was itself a confederation of progressive forces. His resignation thus led to the *Alianza's* fragmentation, which was already a minority government in Congress and often dependent on the Peronist opposition when passing laws.

At this time, the Argentine government initiated negotiations with the IMF for the disbursement of funds to strengthen the economy, after the political crisis precipitated by the resignation of the Vice President. In the context of this deteriorating political and economic situation, international markets began to further scrutinize the country's financial standing and noted problems; perhaps the most blatant of which was the fact that the targets set by the IMF as conditions for the release of additional funds were missed in the first quarter of 2001, helping to facilitate a collapse of confidence in the markets. As one commentator noted, "I was advisor to the [government department associated with the economy] in 1998 and the first half of 1999 and at that time we were in a deep recession yet we always managed to fulfill the targets agreed with the IMF" (Interview with former government representative; name withheld, 2007).

After this failure, Ricardo López Murphy (an economist by training and former Minister of Defence) was appointed Minister of the Economy. This contributed to the deteriorating political situation as his plans involved cutting public expenditure to service the debt, resulting in battles with the governors of the southern provinces over gas subsidies, the tobacco industry, as well as university students over education funding cuts. As six Radical and FrePasSo ministers resigned from the government, it severely debilitated the *Alianza*, leaving De la Rúa increasingly isolated at the helm and supported only by a small clique of personal acquaintances.

López Murphy was soon replaced by Domingo Cavallo—who had been Menem's Minister of the Economy—on March 20 2001. Alongside further spending cuts as part of his "Zero Deficit" program, Cavallo commenced his term with the implementation of a number of competitiveness plans. These aimed to promote production and export sectors through tax incentives and commercial policy instruments (Chudnovsky 2007, 147). However, his next move proved to be more controversial as he began to reform Convertibility in order to stimulate exports as an alternative means to obtain the necessary funds to service the debt. His method

was to introduce a quasi-fixed exchange rate based on a basket of currencies, but primarily the Euro (Schuler 2002, 10). However, the success of Cavallo's plan rested on an initial appreciation of the Euro against the Dollar, followed by a subsequent weakening, so that Argentine exports could regain some competitiveness (Interview with former government representative; name withheld, 2007).

However, in practice, the plan sent a signal to the markets that the Argentine government did not have faith in the Real Exchange Rate (RER) of its currency, prompting fears that the country would abandon Convertibility altogether. Thus pressure on the Argentine peso grew, forcing Central Bank intervention (Schuler 2002, 4). This in turn drained the nation's currency reserves, which fell from a peak of US\$26.2bn in 1999 to US\$19.4bn by 31 December 2001 (INDEC 2006, 479).

These events took Argentina into December 2001, when the country bore witness to a series of remarkable events. In the space of one month, the country saw four presidents come and go, the largest debt default in international history (at the time), the abandonment of the ten-year-old currency exchange regime (and subsequent devaluation of the peso) which had formed the contractual basis of the entire Argentine economy since it was introduced in 1991, a general strike, major lootings, as well as the *Corralito*-a government decree which froze savers' deposits in order to prevent capital flight and a run on the banks. This was implemented by Cavallo on December 1, 2001 and both limited cash withdrawals to 250 Argentine pesos per week whilst completely prohibiting withdrawals from U.S. dollars-denominated accounts (although credit and debit card use remained unrestricted).

The socio-economic crisis sparked widespread food riots and lootings by unemployed sectors-predominantly in Greater Buenos Aires. In response, President de la Rúa declared a national "State of Siege" on the evening of December 19. Yet this provoked an unanticipated and spontaneous outpouring of hundreds of thousands of Argentines onto the streets, including

the middle class whom were angered at his inability to gain control and enraged by his audacity to announce such a repressive move in the face of peoples' desperation (López Levy 2004, 8). However, rather than simply oppose this declaration as an isolated measure, the demand of the *cacerolazo* (pot-banging) protests that echoed around large urban centers that evening was no less radical than *Qué se vayan todos!* – a collective moment (or “scream” as John Holloway would describe it, 2005: 1), which envisioned the removal of the entire political, legal and perhaps even economic establishment and the hope of their replacement with a different, more participatory society. Whilst the precise meaning of the term is much disputed, what is certain is that two decades of neoliberalism accompanied by the weakly developed “delegative democracy” (O'Donnell 1994) that emerged in the aftermath of the 1976-83 military dictatorship had left Argentina with a representative system which was corruption-ridden, unresponsive to the demands of its citizens, and which, increasingly under Menem's administration had devolved power both to the Executive (as rule by presidential decree became more commonplace) as well as to local *caudillos* as quasi-authoritarianisms emerged, especially in the provinces (Armony and Armony 2005, 30). The accompanying crisis of representation had thus been brewing for many years with increasing intensity. The warning shot directed at the political class during the *voto bronca* (angry vote) at the October 2001 legislative elections-when half of the electorate either cast blank votes or abstained (in a country where voting is a legal obligation) and the far-left gained one quarter of the ballots cast-was not heeded and the explosive uprisings of the late-December days was the result.

The state met these protests with violent repression, most notably on the 20 December when approximately 30 people were killed and 4,500 detained (Filippini 2002, 2). The government was impotent to control this climate of chaos and de la Rúa, who had been in office for approximately two years, was forced to resign from the presidency, famously fleeing the *Casa Rosada* (the presidential palace) by helicopter. A succession of several provisional or



unsuccessful presidents followed within the space of several days, as did ongoing social unrest and an abortive economic recovery plan based on a new currency. The legislative assembly finally designated the prominent Peronist, Eduardo Duhalde as President. He also oversaw the “extraordinary year” of 2002 when Argentina became a laboratory for a range of innovative autonomous experiments in participatory economics and democracy, which often involved organizing autonomously and utilized horizontal decision-making practices.

During this period, millions of citizens took part in the burgeoning barter club movement, scores of popular and neighborhood assemblies sprang up in Buenos Aires and other urban centers, thousands of workers occupied and then “recovered” the factories and offices in which they had worked, middle-class savers continued their *escrache* protests (public shaming events that were first used against the perpetrators of dictatorship-era crimes) outside the banks, *cacerolazos* multiplied and major cities were paralyzed on a daily basis by the presence of *piquetes* (roadblocks by the unemployed workers’ movement). This climate of mass mobilization continued until the 2003 elections in which Duhalde did not stand. By the time of the ballot, the most severe effects of the crisis had run their course. However, any incoming president would have to deal with a country brought to its knees economically, financially, politically, and socially; the road to recovery was expected to be both long and arduous.

### ***Rationale of the volume***

In light of the turmoil and rapid change experienced during and after the crisis, this timely volume seeks to understand and explain the many impacts of and contrasting responses to the Argentine political, economic and social crises of 2001-02. In this way, the book illustrates how periods of widespread upheaval permeate all aspects of state and society and political, economic and cultural life. The chapters in this volume critically examine the period in question through a range of disciplinary approaches, examining the relationship between cultural,

political, economic and societal spheres and from the unique perspective of over a decade since the crisis. This allows our contributors to analyze not only the multi-faceted crisis itself - and multiple understandings of the term - but also the myriad of responses to it, as well as a consideration of the long aftermath and processes of recovery.

Whilst a plethora of monographs and journal articles covering Argentina's crisis and associated responses over the last decade have emerged from Argentina itself,<sup>1</sup> English-language publications in the political science literature are scarce, particularly those that combine reflections from academics in Argentina, the Americas and Europe. This makes our volume all the more important if our understanding of crisis is to be enhanced in the English-speaking world. Although there are a number of interesting sources in the current literature that this book complements and builds upon, comparable publications focus on specific disciplinary areas such as political economy,<sup>2</sup> social movements, or more literary fields, rather than collating contributions from different disciplinary approaches and encouraging a dialogue between them in the same volume as ours does. Further, there has been significantly less scholarly attention devoted to the cultural repercussions and representations of the 2001-02 crisis.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the authors feel it of particular importance to include chapters on cultural responses to the crisis of neoliberalism, given that unfettered capitalism seeks to reproduce its own values in the cultural sphere as much as any other, in particular through the commodification of every aspect of life and their exposure to the power of market forces (Couldry 2010).

This publication therefore includes the following topics: macroeconomic, industrial and social policy under the Duhalde and Kirchner presidencies, popular resistance, literary and cultural representations, and changing models of political economy. It includes chapters with original theoretical models that help to evaluate the various dynamics of the crisis, as well as presenting empirical work from a rich variety of disciplinary backgrounds that illuminate the various reactions to Argentina's economic, political and social implosion across distinct

sections of society. These contribute different levels of analysis; from civil society to the state through to analysis of global processes. The notion of crisis and subsequent responses therefore extend beyond narrow understandings of the economy to encompass the political, societal and cultural fields.

When examining the multiple layers of crisis and how it has been addressed, Argentina represents a particularly interesting case, often resisting theoretical classification by various scholars (for example, neither of Castañeda's (2006) infamous "good left" nor "bad left" models can be readily attributed to it). This publication seeks to move away from such attempts at categorization, instead grounding its analysis in a truly interdisciplinary framework that offers a comprehensive overview of the different aspects and dynamics of the 2001-02 crisis and both its immediate and more long-term impacts. Although this volume understands the "moment" of the crisis itself as a watershed (as elucidated by Ana C. Dinerstein's chapter on the "hidden grammar" of the political recovery), subsequent responses to it and the associated recovery are also of significance (cf. especially Miguel A. Rivera-Quñones and Heike Schaumburg). We examine a full spectrum of responses: some are constructed and forced, some are spontaneous, some are "top-down", and others emanate from both institutionalized organisations and informal groups "from below".

Moreover, in geographical terms, the volume resists the common error of conveying events merely through a Buenos Aires perspective. Instead it explores broader and more geographically diverse viewpoints, as well as incorporating voices from the interior. For example, Saskia Fischer's chapter is dedicated to the struggles of the Mapuche communities in Patagonia, Ana C. Dinerstein looks at unemployed workers' movement responses not just in Greater Buenos Aires but also in Salta and beyond and Maristella Svampa discusses the various forms of resistance that have emerged to confront the expansion of multinational mega-mining projects in rural Catamarca, Chubut and elsewhere. These act as a counterpoint to

Schaumburg's chapter that focuses on popular urban mobilization in Buenos Aires. In other chapters, whilst the capital city is often a focal point, Ignacio Aguiló reflects on the influx of immigrants from both Argentina's provinces, as well as from Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay into Buenos Aires as a result of changes in the 1990s. Meanwhile, Cecilia Dinardi briefly interrogates the differences between post-crisis commemorative processes in the capital and those in the Northern provinces like Tucuman. This approach ensures that Argentina's cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity is more fairly represented across the country's terrain.

This book's central argument is that whilst the notions of 'crisis' and subsequent trajectory of responses and recovery can be understood (relatively superficially) in terms of Argentina's emergence from the abyss of the macroeconomic shock of 2001, history has demonstrated that the years following enormous social upheavals are marked by a plethora of macro and micro-responses in the economic, political and social spheres. In each of these interrelated spheres crisis thus provokes a particular "response", or range of responses which can be understood as both a rejection of what came before it but also a 'recovery' or reclaiming of either some kind of political or economic model, past identity, imaginary, or cultural frame of reference. This appeal to the "past" and resurrection of elements of previous models converges with new, emerging ideas to form a (re)constructed response, which reflects both continuities yet also ruptures with the past. Thus, this volume aims to transcend these traditional binary oppositions and argues that the resulting synthesis of "old" and "new" is central to the social, economic, political and cultural responses that have been witnessed during the decade under consideration in this publication.

However, we also assert that responses to crisis are *not only* about the merging of old and new models and ideas, but they are also, concurrently, responses to both old and new *problems* – many of which pre-date 2001. In particular, the origins of these issues can be traced back to the neoliberal decade of the 1990s and to the military dictatorship that laid its

foundations in 1976-83. As such, a number of the chapters reveal more subtle and nebulous responses to the events of 2001, which often arose as a result of social and political change in the years preceding the crisis, but the intensity of which was accelerated by the upheaval of crisis itself. In this way, the diverse chapters and responses therein demonstrate that the dichotomies between old and new are rather blurred, or even “false”, with crisis acting as a cause, a catalyst and also a consequence of the actors, themes and debates that are discussed throughout the book.

For instance, Christopher Wylde’s contribution highlights how the economic imbalances responsible for the crisis of 2001-02 have their origins in policy formulated during the Convertibility period of the 1990s. Fischer’s chapter discusses how the unsustainability of the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ model in the last thirty years has also had devastating longer-term consequences for both Argentina’s economy and in particular the indigenous Mapuche communities in rural areas. Meanwhile, the chapter by Aguiló offers a valuable insight into literary work that emerged in the aftermath of the crisis, but that actually points to concerns surrounding ‘whiteness’ that grew as a response to the social and economic change that was ushered in during the 1990s. Our nuanced approach thus facilitates a consideration of the unevenness of social, political and change in the post-crisis period. The framework is sufficiently focused so as to highlight sources of continuity and change in making sense of changing post-crisis Argentina, yet broad enough to recognize the inherent contingencies and asymmetrical aspects of this process.

This volume is also particularly timely in the wake of the current global economic and political crisis that has been experienced most acutely in Europe and North America. Since 2008 this has precipitated a recent upsurge in scholarly interest in past financial crises, both in Argentina, elsewhere in Latin America and beyond. Latin America has aroused much interest among academics and analysts; both as a result of the swing to the left in much of the region

(dubbed the “Pink Tide”), the emergence of Brazil as one of the BRIC economies as well as the region’s recent experiences of economic crisis. Comparative research is important because it permits lessons from that experience to be drawn – in our example, especially from post-2001 Argentina.

Realization of the importance of this comparative agenda informs the analysis throughout this volume. Our contributors place Argentina’s crisis of 2001-02 within the context of the current global financial crisis, noting that the very particular political responses to it reflected the accompanying crisis of political representation that are also apparent today in countries like Greece, Spain, Italy, Iceland, as well as regional phenomena such as the Arab Spring. We also explore similarities and differences in terms of policy responses from the state and different sectors of society through literary, media and cultural expression. Through such analysis, distinct modes of engagement with the crisis at local, national and regional level are revealed, which should be viewed within a longer-term historical trajectory. Further, in this respect, we try to position the events of 2001 within the panorama of historical cycles of crisis to which the Argentine economy is particularly susceptible, whilst elucidating comparisons and points of departure with past crises. The Argentine crisis itself thus becomes a bridge across which our theoretical foundation offers interesting potential avenues of enquiry into other crises-past, present, and future.

### ***Synopsis of the volume***

The origins of this publication date back to a major international conference in December 2011 entitled “Crisis, Response and Recovery: A Decade on from the *Argentinazo* 2001-11” which was held at the Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London. Convened by two of the book’s editors (Cara Levey and Daniel Ozarow), its purpose was to mark the ten-year anniversary of Argentina’s economic crisis and social revolt and most of the chapters in this volume were originally presented at this forum. The publication itself is also supported by

the Argentina Research Network-an initiative that brings together academics, researchers and postgraduate students from a wide range of disciplines who share a research interest in Argentina and which the editors and many of contributors are involved.

The volume draws on contributions from some of the most authoritative and well-established writers on contemporary Argentina, as well as emerging scholars from Argentina, Latin America, Europe and beyond; thus showcasing a wide range of expertise and perspectives that cover heterodox as well as more traditional approaches. The chapters are arranged thematically and divided into three sections; on political economy, state and civil society relations, and literary and cultural representations respectively.

In Part One, entitled “The Political Economy of (Post) Crisis Argentina”, contributions further explore this historical framework of crisis in a number of interesting and complementary ways (both spatially and temporally). Its authors contend that although the crisis led to a questioning of former models of capital accumulation, especially those that dominated during the preceding years of neoliberalism, change did not simply bestow a return to old models of Import-Substitution Industrialization and populism but rather, a new model was articulated that possessed elements of continuity as well as change with both pre-crisis neoliberalism and more historical forms of political economy. For example, in the first chapter by Wylde which examines the crisis itself, he analyses how aspects from both the historic (Peronist Import Substitution Industrialization-ISI) and more contemporary (neoliberal) model of political economy may both be assigned culpability for the events of 2001-02. Further, in rejecting the false dichotomy of structural inevitability versus policy failure as competing explanations for the crisis, this chapter demonstrates the complex and interrelated nature of the causes of the economic collapse. Thus, it also offers a nuanced analysis of the interplay of both models and the resulting public policy nexus. The crisis was therefore about the merging of old

and new, both in terms of the nature of how it manifested itself economically, politically, and socially, as well as the underlying problems that facilitated its origins.

The second chapter, by Cecilia T. Lanata Briones and Rubén M. Lo Vuolo, examines the regime of capital accumulation in Argentina (from an econometric perspective) across the second half of the twentieth century, examining sources of continuity and change in terms of the distribution of the proceeds of economic growth between capital and labor, and how they have evolved over the last sixty-seventy years. Guiding us into the present, they develop an econometric model to assess how the recovery of the ‘social’ has been integrated into the post-convertibility economic model (as opposed to the Washington Consensus’ abandonment of it). Thus they test whether *Kirchnerismo*’s attempts to utilize social policy to reach out to previously excluded groups - or perhaps those that were included at one point, then abandoned - has succeeded or failed. These authors therefore incorporate an examination of more historical crises in Argentina, and how the response to 2001-02 relates to responses to previous crises in Argentina’s long-term historical trajectory. This builds on Wylde’s chapter which provides insights into both the country’s cycles of crisis as well as making a comparison with other Latin American societal experiences of neoliberal capital accumulation and associated crises.

Meanwhile, the final chapter in this section by Rivera-Quñones continues the interrogation of this framework during the Kirchner period through an examination of the dynamics of Argentina’s soy industry. A broad examination of Argentine political economy reveals that, through the lens of post neoliberalism, the framework of change and continuity best encapsulates the nature of the *Kirchnerismo* project. This is induced and underpinned through a detailed empirical examination of the soy sector, revealing on the one hand the specific contours of change in the form of how the proceeds of this industry are redistributed through *retenciones* (export taxes) and state spending priorities. Yet on the other, specific contours of continuity are also manifest through the intransigent patterns of Argentine trade



before and after the crisis as well as a preservation of not only its place in the international division of labor but also in the sector's ownership structure and in the dominance of transnational corporations. Through exploring the nature of recovery, Rivera-Quíñones therefore points to fundamental aspects of continuity in the model of political economy, as well as elements of change. Collectively, the section therefore contributes directly to the book's core themes, while each individual chapter builds on this framework in important ways.

Part Two of the book, entitled "Social Movements and Mass Mobilisation before, during and after *Que se vayan todos*" conveys the diverse range of civil society responses to the crisis in both the short and long term. Emphasis is given to an analysis of the myriad of social movements and social actors that both pre-dated the crisis like the *piqueteros* (Dinerstein), those which emerged in the immediate aftermath such as the *cacerolazos* and *escraches* (as explained in Onuch's chapter) and assemblies (mentioned by Schaumberg and Svampa) as well as those which appeared, (or at least became more prominent actors) later on, such as those which were fuelled by indigenous, rural and environmental activism (Svampa). Particular attention is made in each case on how these actors engaged with the state. The section also includes Schaumberg's overview of what she terms the "intermezzo" period, referencing how these different actors that are portrayed elsewhere in the section, behaved during it. The principle theme of the volume assumes a renewed analytical clarity through an exploration of how these movements simultaneously either sought or manifest the 'recovery' of the past, yet also invented imaginative new modes of action through their responses. Taking each of these contributions in turn:

The section begins with Onuch's analysis of the response of ordinary citizens and their role as rational political actors during the crisis period and especially on December 19 and 20 2001. She moves away from a focus on the politico-economic elite, activist leaders, or foreign actors, to allow the participants in those protests to speak for themselves. Drawing on

ethnographic research conducted in Argentina at the time, Onuch shows that those involved in the uprisings articulated their protest participation using a sophisticated rights-based discourse. She expresses how the demand for profound and systemic change was accompanied by the recognition that whatever social, political and economic model that was to eventually emerge in the aftermath, would inevitably feature significant elements of the *ancien régime* too, at least in the minds of ordinary citizens.

This is followed by Dinerstein's contribution in which she explores the nature of how the events of December 2001 have conferred political change in Argentina. Politics is understood in Rancierean terms as what designates the rupture with the existing embodied patterns of doing, being and saying -which she calls "la police." The uprising was therefore a response to the existing hegemonic culture, with the crisis itself offsetting two tenets: "disagreement" (contention with the existing order) and "hope" that it would open spaces for the creation of a new reality to that represented by neoliberalism. However, unlike other chapters in this volume, Dinerstein's engages with the notion that "crisis" (and in this instance the "scream" of 'Que se vayan todos') can also provoke a response of anticipation of "what has not yet become", rather than simply a recovery of the past alone. In other words, history informs us that the restoration of power by the dominant class (in this instance since mid-2003) does not represent a historical end point, but rather entails the establishment of a new political and economic configuration which itself possesses internal contradictions within it that provide the basis for further opportunities for rebellion and thus hope for change that extends beyond the situation that exists in the current moment.

On the theme of trying to find meaning in the demand for "QSVT", Schaumberg's chapter outlines how the collective social uprisings and spirit of solidarity that pervaded society during the crisis period symbolized a repudiation of the individualism and free market economic model which had been advanced by neoliberalism's multilateral governing

institutions. Yet in contrast to Dinerstein, rather than considering what it may have meant in the moment of revolt, she articulates how the counter-hegemonic project which emerged was unable to mature to the extent that a new social and political order could be firmly established. Thus, it was due to this failure that elements of the potentially revolutionary movement “from below” had little choice but to either face marginalization or return to traditional reformist strategies of negotiation and compromise that social movements have historically entered into with Peronist governments in order to achieve at least *some* of their objectives. In this sense, “continuity” is observed through the accommodation which these movements made to the capitalist state. Further, she describes how despite what some have interpreted as the failure of the movement in the years *since* the crisis, many of the uprising’s most emblematic features such as horizontal forms of organizing and participatory democracy have persisted. It is by understanding and proliferating these social and political models that, she claims, the seeds for the intensification of future class struggle are sown. Thus, both Dinerstein’s interpretation of the uprising as anticipation of what *could be* and Schaumberg’s insinuation of a process of perpetual resistance, both make overtures to the significance of the social uprisings for Argentina’s future.

The section concludes with Svampa’s reading of Argentina and in particular the National Popular model during the last decade, which she encapsulates in four ‘key moments’ to demonstrate respective elements of continuity and change. These include the 2001 mobilizations, the ascent of Néstor Kirchner to the presidency in 2003, the so-called “crisis del campo” (countryside conflict) in 2008 and then the breakdown of *Kirchnerismo*’s social alliances, followed by mass anti-government demonstrations in 2012 and 2013. Aspects of “old and new” are thus reflected in several forms, including the model being both something that was at once very different to what came before it under Menemism and the de la Rúa administration, yet also signified the resurrection of a central role for the State, the return of

Latin Americanist progressivism, cooption of movements ‘from below’, clientelism and elements of authoritarianism - all of which constitute traditional facets of Peronism. Also intriguing is how she identifies the exposure of ‘old’ contradictions between national-popular dynamics and the logic of dispossession. The antagonisms between these are necessarily supported by the State in order to maintain its domination, thus in the process they offset new forms of rural and indigenous resistance in response, as such sectors defend their natural resources against multinational exploitation. More recently, these contradictions are evidenced by Argentina’s growing political polarization and how *Kirchnerismo* has prompted a realignment of political forces which have reinforced opposition from both traditional Peronist enemies like international financial capitalism as well as having created a new enemy in the form of its historical ally – the General Confederation of Workers (CGT).

Meanwhile, response is not only expressed as rejection of previous forms of governance or economic policy, but also in cultural and literary terms. The chapters included in Part Three, entitled “Cultural and Media Responses to the 2001 Crisis”, judiciously demonstrate the interplay between culture, politics and economics and suggest that such responses are inextricably linked. Together, the different contributions reveal the way in which, longer term, crisis has shaped and led to the construction of different forms of identity (national, racial, cultural) that are visible in formal government cultural policy (Dinardi), in patterns of resistance and (re)mobilization of indigenous Argentines (Fischer) and also in post-2001 forms of literary production (Aguiló). The individual contributions are also united by the way in which distinct cultural modes of representation reveal continuity and change, albeit in markedly different ways.

As Aguiló aptly demonstrates, in the “new” cultural renaissance which followed the crisis in terms of Argentine cinema, literature and the arts, “old” themes resurface-such as the use of racial difference as a defensive response to downward social mobility from the

impoverished white, urban middle class. These were openly addressed in the literature at the time. Thus, Aguiló describes the way in which quasi-Sarmientan notions of civilization (whitening) versus barbarism (*el negro*) were resuscitated as the white, European-aspiring but downwardly mobile Argentine middle class struggled to differentiate themselves from their structurally impoverished fellow citizens. The ways that they responded by reconstructing their own racially superior identity not only in the post-2001 era, but also incrementally during the 1990s, are outlined in this section. This reassertion of racial difference is indicative not only of a particularly literary response to economic and social crisis, but also of a crisis of cultural and racial identity. Although preoccupation with the (re)presentation of Argentina as a predominantly white country is thus presented as a recurrent theme in its national history, it is one which becomes more acute in the post-2001 period.

Distinct cultural identities have also experienced resurgence in the face of capitalism's attempts at "accumulation by dispossession" since the crisis. In her study of the Mapuche communities in Patagonia, Fischer demonstrates how these identities have been reinforced to galvanize resistance through independent local media projects, shifting focus away from the city and province of Buenos Aires. Thus, the way in which the post-crisis period also represented the recovery of a dormant, yet collective indigenous identity through the *pueblos originarios* (the indigenous population) resistance to the expansion of the extractive industries, intensive agriculture or large-scale tourism projects (following two decades of neoliberal restructuring) is demonstrated. The media thus becomes a space in which responses to the crisis by (historically) marginalized groups, are expressed and have become clearly visible, whilst the post-crisis panorama has provided new opportunities for such groups.

Yet the use, manipulation and control of public (urban) space also changed before and after the crisis. This notion is discussed by Dinardi, who explores the politics of commemoration and return to the past during the bicentenary celebrations of Argentine

independence in 2010 and which were deemed a success in terms of public participation and the regaining of public space after the 2001 political and economic meltdown. Dinardi explores the narratives of state-led commemoration, which, like the literary output discussed by Aguiló, reflect a reconstitution of and return to a particular vision of the past and national identity at a crucial historical moment in the face of crisis. In this case, one of the clearest impacts of the crisis is evident in a loss of faith in governmental institutions, which in turn shapes state cultural policy.

And so, these three distinct sections illustrate how the multilayered effects of and various temporalities associated with Argentina's crisis weaved between the different social, cultural, economic and political realms. The multitude of responses to and resistances against it by a range of social actors both during and after 2001 were as much about struggles over the past as they were struggles to reclaim the future.

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<sup>1</sup> For example *Estudios*, 2011 vol.26; IMF, 2004; Fiorucci and Klein eds., 2004; Epstein and Pion-Berlin, eds. 2006

<sup>2</sup> See Grugel and Rigorrozzi, 2009, 2012; Ruckert and MacDonald, 2009; Panizza, 2009; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2009; Cannon and Kirby, 2012; Wylde, 2012

<sup>3</sup> Exceptions include Page, 2009; Rangil Rosario ed., 2007; Miller and Crolley, 2007; Grimson, 2004